

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	
Project Name: Dry Prairie Opheim Branch lines Project- Phase 1 A	Proposed Implementation Date: Summer 2023
Proponent: Dry Prairie Rural Water Authority, 5808 Highway 16, Culbertson, MT 59218	
Type and Purpose of Action: The proponent proposes to install multiple water transmission pipelines throughout Valley County for water transmission to the surrounding community.	
Location: Sec. 15, Twp. 31N, Rge. 40E, Sec. 16, Twp. 31 Rge. 40E, Sec. 17, Twp. 31N, Rge. 40E, Sec. 11, Twp. 34N Rge. 40E, Sec. 16, Twp. 34N Rge. 40E, Sec. 16, Twp 35N Rge. 40E, Sec. 2 Twp. 35N Rge. 43E	Counties: Valley

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	
1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	Jan Vogel of DGR Engineering, a contractor for the proponent, submitted applications for ROW for the project across School Trust lands. After discussing placement of the line, the project was reviewed by Glasgow Unit staff.
2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:	No other governmental agencies have jurisdiction over this project as it pertains to School Trust lands. Montana DNRC, Real Estate Management Bureau has jurisdiction over the project.
3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	Action Alternative: Grant permission to the proponent to install the water pipelines across School Trust lands.  No Action Alternative: Deny permission to proponent to install water pipelines across School Trust lands.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS
<p>4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compatible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>The area of impact consists of various silty and clay loam soils that are common throughout the general area. However, none of these soils are fragile or unstable, and no unusual geologic features are present.</p> <p>Action Alternative: There would be temporary soil disturbance due to the digging required to install the line underground. This disturbance is relatively shallow and removes/displaces very little soil. Slight soil compaction would occur due to temporarily increased vehicle use.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no changes to soils.</p>
<p>5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?</p>	<p>There are no important water resources present within the area of impact. The lines themselves would provide potable water transmission.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The proposed project would not negatively impact the quality, quantity and distribution of water. It would allow for improved drinking water quality through the area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, there will be no impacts to water quality, quantity and distribution.</p>
<p>6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?</p>	<p>This project is not influenced by any air quality regulations or zones. A short-term increase in vehicle traffic will result in a slight increase in dust. No pollutants would be produced.</p> <p>Action Alternative: This type of</p>

## II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	<p>project would have minimal impact to air quality. Some dust may occur due to vehicle use.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to air quality.</p>
<p>7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>There are many different types of vegetation present within the area of impact, including native rangeland, non-native grasses and shrubs, and annually harvested cropland. No rare plants or cover types are present.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The line would have no impact on the vegetative community due to the minimal impact of the trenching process used to install the line.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to the plant communities.</p>
<p>8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p>	<p>The School Trust lands potentially impacted by this project provide habitat for many different wildlife species, including upland birds, grassland songbirds, antelope and deer.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Any impacts due to installation of the line would be very short-term and would be mitigated quickly with the return to normal management practices.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to the possible use as wildlife habitat.</p>
<p>9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified</p>	<p>The area of impact does not consist of any sensitive or specially identified habitat. No wetlands are within the area of impact. The following species of concern are listed as being at</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
<p>habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern?</p>	<p>least seasonally present within the area of impact: Ferruginous Hawk, Bobolink, Smooth Green snake, Sprague's Pipit, Golden Eagle, Baird's Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, Long-billed Curlew, Brewer's Sparrow, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Thick-billed Longspur, hoary bat, and Bobolink.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Any impacts due to installation of the line would be small-scale, short-term and mitigated quickly with the return to normal agricultural management practices (livestock grazing and farming).</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to the environmental resources.</p>
<p>10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>A Class III cultural and paleontological resources inventory was conducted of the area of potential effect (APE). No such resources were identified on State School Trust Land within the APE. Water pipeline installation work will result in <i>No Effect to Antiquities</i> as defined under the Montana State Antiquities Act. A formal report of findings has been prepared and is on file with the DNRC and the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The proposed project would have no impact on historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There would be no impact to historical or archaeological sites under this alternative.</p>
<p>11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated</p>	<p>The proposed project is directly adjacent to county roads and highways, so the installation of the line would</p>

## II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?

be readily visible to the public. After installation, however, there would be very few lasting visible signs of the project. The project is in a sparsely populated area.

Action Alternative: An underground line in this area would not alter the aesthetics at all.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to aesthetics.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?

Environmental resources in the area are not specifically limited and are not affected by the proposed project. No nearby activities would affect the project.

Action Alternative: The proposed project would place no additional demands on any environmental resources in the area.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no demands placed on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?

There are currently no other plans, studies or projects on these tracts, besides typical agricultural activities.

Action Alternative: This project would not impact any other plans or studies that Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has on the School Trust land.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to the plans or studies.

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	<p>The operation and movement of heavy equipment and vehicles has inherent risks that are not impacted by access across the School Trust land.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The installation of the lines would slightly increase the risk of fire during the project due to increased vehicle traffic.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to human health or safety.</p>
15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	<p>The area of impact is managed for typical agricultural activities including seasonal livestock grazing and dryland farming.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Any short-term disturbance to vegetation on the tract would be too small to have a measurable economic impact on the agricultural activities on this tract.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to agricultural activities.</p>
16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	<p>Action Alternative: The project would not create nor impact any jobs in the area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to quantity and distribution of employment under this alternative.</p>
17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	<p>Action Alternative: The project would have no impacts on the local and state tax base and tax revenues.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to the local and state tax base under this alternative.</p>

<p>18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project would increase vehicle traffic in the area during installation. There would be no additional demand for governmental services.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no additional demand for government services.</p>
<p>19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?</p>	<p>There are no special management plans in effect on the School Trust lands. They are managed for typical agricultural activities.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The project has cleared State (DNRC) management plans.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to locally adopted environmental plans and goals.</p>
<p>20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?</p>	<p>These tracts are readily accessible to the public as the proposed lines generally follow the path of county roads and/or state highway, and this project would have no impact on that access.</p> <p>Action Alternative: No changes to public land access or recreational potential would occur.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to the recreational values.</p>
<p>21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project would not impact the density and distribution of population and housing.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to the density and distribution of population and housing.</p>
<p>22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project would enhance potable water distribution to</p>

traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	<p>residents in the surrounding area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to the social structures under this alternative.</p>
23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	<p>Action Alternative: The project would not impact the cultural uniqueness and diversity of this rural area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to the cultural uniqueness and diversity under this alternative.</p>
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	<p>This project is intended to enhance the ability of Dry Prairie Rural Water Authority to provide clean drinking water to the surrounding area/communities. This is a very rural area with relatively limited water distribution currently.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Allowing installation of the lines across School Trust lands would have relatively little economic impact to the School Trust but would provide surrounding communities with enhanced water distribution and service.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to the social and economic circumstances under this alternative.</p>

EA Checklist Prepared By: s/Luke Gunderson Date: 4/25/2023  
 Luke Gunderson Land Use Specialist

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Action Alternative
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	No significant impacts expected.



